2/14/70

Dear Dick,

Copies Gary, Paul Mary (which accounts for expurgation),

There is so much feces served as manna by those who, having helped one road to hell seem intent on dualizing it, I respond to your note of the 10th immediately-without even unpacking the transcripts, which also came in today's mail, with another of the weekly snows we have been having. At the moment, I feel that the time and effort required in an attempt to undo them harm the wishful thinkers and the irresponsible have done greatly exceeds any contributions to knowledge they may have made or will be capable of. One story like this getting around and shot down again will put us back that much farthur, so I tell you what the truth is, it having originated with me.

Your informant has just told you that

Brener was being paid by the CIA while acting as Shaw's lawyer and Novel's lawyer. He admitted this to a New Orleans States-Item reporter in a week moment in 1967.

First of all, Shaw was not involved. Second of all, Brener was never Novel's lawyer. And there was no "weak moment". It was deliberate. Next, it was not one reporter (who was then not a reporter but a rewrite man), a States-Item reporter and a radio man.

To quote Merriman Smith, "with that for opemers," here is the rest.

At the time I testified before the grand jury, 4/28/67, there was no one in the local press Garrison would talk to, especially at their paper. Typically, this cut him off from his only local journalistic friends. I refused to give anything but my name before entering the grand-jury room, which led to an S-I story calling me a New York writer. Front page and all that, but no good for me or the sale of books. When I emerged, I refused to say what I had said, what I had been asked, and when they got up tight I did. I told them a grand-jurt proceeding was close to sacred, that the rights of everyone required silence about it, and that, if the would but stop to think, the one thing I could do that could not serve any slefish purpose was to preserve silence about it. I had books to sell, and that is not done with silence. So, I said, I offer this as a sign of my bona fides. I could see this scored. I then said ask me about anything else and I'll talk as long as you want. So they did and I did, for close to an hour. Sam DePina, then of the local ABC station and now with the net in NYC, taped it and I have his tape.

When it was over, Sam and Ross Yockey came up to me and asked me if I'd be interested in lunching with them. I accepted. As we left the Courts Bldg, they asked if I minded picking up a colleague. So we got Hokk May at the S-I. We had a long and agreeable lunch. We exchanged information. They spelled out their problem with Garrison and did not have to spell his out to me. During this long lunch (at Maylie's, where I ordered the wrong thing, not their specialty), among the things they told me is that one of the attorneys, the one representing John The Baptist Cancler, had been trying to palm off the story NBC ultimately used. They had met with him on several occasions. One one of these he studiously told them that his fees for the Garrison witnesses were being paid by the CIA but that if they reported it they'd deny he had said it. He is a nasty one whose name escapes me at the moment, I am pretty sure (but not certainly) that it was not Brener. I admit it may have been. The guy with the beard who did represent Novel, and others. But beyond any question, NOT SHAW, whose representation was clear from the first, the only change being the leaving of Guy Johnson and the bringing in of Dymond for

the trial work, in court.

The rest is, not being able to see into the future and not having had a chance to read characters, having just arrived in N.O. for the first ~~timmix~~ time the day before and having had every moment filled, I offered to try and bring Jim and these men together. He took my word that they, personally, were on his side (as all then were, deeply and sincerely. Hoke quite for a while, as he got more and more successful and affluent, divorced his wife, married a young chick with the DJ, and, at last word, had left her and was back on course), and that if he wanted less poison in the papers he had to see that they were not cut off from what he wanted to say. We left Maylie's, the four of us. went directly to Jim's building, I saw him promptly, and he said "bring them in". I did and I then left them alone. I had told him the truthful version of this story (I do not bore you with the details of the Cancer story, most of which was on NBC, of their willingness to report it on certain assurances never offered) and other things they had told me, capsuled, and I presume they went into the same things.

You may recall that there was a brief period of time after my first trip, before the sycophants moved in and took over, when Jim was not spouting off, when there were credible stories coming out of N.O. Jim may have needed no help in terminating his reform, but he sure as hell had more than most men can handle, and I need not repeat their well-known names again. They bear a very heavy responsibility, especially because, without exception, they commercialized it heavily, one staying busy making speeches at $1500 each.

The name comes back. Steve Plotkin. NOT Brener, I am pretty certain.

So, for Christ's sake, if not our own, wherever this story has been spread where it may be used, please try and tell the recipients that at the very least it was not and could not have been Shaw. Novel has had sufficient to say of his own connections, whether or not true, that nothing is gained by repeating this as it relates to him.

Now, I believe Plotkin did say this, I believe it was not a weak moment but a deliberate design to build himself locally, and I believe it is not impossible, even if I do doubt that is the way the Agency would have handled it or that he is the one they's have selected. I have reason to believe(Unconfirmed) they have another firm on a retainer basis. But, Brener is one of the best choices they could have made, and they'd merely have sent their people to him, not compromised themselves and him by spelling it out. I do not doubt those reporters. Everything else they told me that I tried to check out did, 100%

On Brener, I have had some correspondence with Paul on his book and probably didn't send you any of it. Why not read his book and make up your own mind whether he speaks for himself alone, whether he had purposes other than making a record against Garrison, from the deepest conviction, etc. I think it is possible to make out a case that one of Brener's clients, Martens, does have connections. B may or may not know about them. This has long been out of my mind, and I do not, instantly recall, all his clients. But make no mistake about it, he is an excellent and respected lawyer, a man of keen mind and established competence. His firm also represents Tom Bethell. They may be doing this from deep belief, feeling Tom acted on principle, etc., and I can believe Tom also believes this and tells himself he had no other interest. I am jot saying I believe it is true. But, Tom also happens to have been entirely out of his depth and performed with spectacular incompetence. Garrison knew he could not perform. He once asked me to interview Larry Borenstein about the Ruby painting bit, and said Tom has spoken to him, to speak to Tom first and learn what he knew. Tom got so up ~~tightx~~ about it, fiercely and profanely, that I didn't. I should have (viz what I later picked up, COUP-Gaudet, the man who tipped the FBI on this diversion). One of the consequences is that we now do not have that whole story and may never get it. I could have, then. It is possible.

When I finally met him, he told me what he had told Tom. I believe his story. It therefore is obvious this tip to the FBI served another purpose and I'd have been interested in that. I met Larry entirely by accident the last night I was in N.O., as I recall it, while I was doing something for Moo so he could sleep or because he thought I could do it when he couldn't. It was in the wee small hours, and he was with others part of the time and Jack Burnside, a friend of Thornleys's, joined us later, so we had practically no time for meaningful talk. I think that he may know things the significance of which he does not know. If I am ever in N.O. again, I do intend to seek him out privately. He is very sharp. And gets around. And remembers. The story of the painting is true but also without significance. He remembers it well, even to the artist and the picture. He was the agent. If Ruby wanted "class" in his joint, there is no cheaper place to buy it than Pirates Alley or Jackson Square.

I'll also be interested in the details your source supplies, if he complies with your request for them.

But do, please, give me your impressions of Brener and his book and motives after you read it.

Incidently, do you want a copy of Bringuier's book? If you do, please do not buy it because one has been on order for me for two konths and has not arrived and I've asked Hal, who can get one readily in SF, to get me one so I can read it now. I know of some lies/libels that are priveleged, but there may be others I may be called upon to respond to and Bringuier is both a pack-rat abd a blabbermouth, so I want to see what he said without realizing what he was saying. He may have spilled much. Or nothing.

There just is no way of getting some people to check things out and some confuse checking outwith ignoring what is inconsistent, present company not excepted, regardless of the purity of his purpose. So, thanks for letting me know, even if it wasted an hour, so the chances of its getting spread and used can be diminsihed. Which is a hell of a way to spend time when there is so much that should be done. That one source has been responsible for so enormous a waste of time, has brought us so close to disaster.

Best regards,

Harold Weisberg